Mr. Randel Perry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District
c/o GPT/BNSF Custer Spur EIS Co-Lead Agencies
1100 112th Avenue Northeast, Suite 400
Bellevue, Washington 98004

January 20, 2013

Dear Mr. Perry:

I am submitting the following scoping comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in response to its September 21, 2012, Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the application from Pacific International Terminal, Inc. for the Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway's Custer Spur rail expansion projects. These comments are submitted in an effort to aid the Corps and the other co-lead agencies in identifying issues that I believe should be addressed in the EIS. Please ensure that my comments are entered into the public record.

The proposed rail transport of Powder River Basin (PRB) coal from and through Montana to the West Coast will have real and significant impacts to Montanans and are a connected and cumulative result of what happens at Cherry Point. The EIS being prepared by the Corps and its partners for the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion projects MUST include the connected and cumulative impacts that increased coal train traffic will have and cause all the way back through Montana to the PRB coal mines in Montana and Wyoming.

As a former federal compliance officer, I completely understand the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Through the Council of Environmental Quality's NEPA implementing regulations, an agency is required to analyze any proposal in consideration of other actions that are connected (40 C.F.R. §1508.25(a)(1)) and are cumulative (40 C.F.R. §1508.7, §1508.25 (a)(2)). As I am sure your agency compliance officers know, a "connected action" is any action that is closely related to the proposal, cannot or will not proceed unless the proposal happens, or those that are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification. "Cumulative impacts" are those "which result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time."

The GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion project at Cherry Point is only one part (albeit a major part) of an overall plan by coal and rail corporations. Based on PRB coal company projections, coal export will amount to at least 75 million tons of coal and as much as 170 million tons each year through Montana. This means that Montana will likely experience at least 30 more coal trains (15 loaded going west and 15 empty returning to the coal fields) and up to as many as 64 more coal trains each day – in addition to all the train traffic we currently experience. All outgoing coal trains from the PRB headed for Pacific Northwest ports pass through Billings, Montana. My community of Bozeman could experience 15 to 20 more trains each day on top of the 16 to 20 trains we currently experience.

The proposed GPT/BNSF Custer Spur project is integrally connected to this increased coal train traffic as well as increased coal mining and increased pollution from the burning of coal. There are connected health, life/safety, economic, and social costs from this project all the way back to the PRB coal mines in Montana and Wyoming. All of these connected impacts are also cumulative.

The increased number of trains in Montana will mean more noise, a greater potential that emergency responders will be delayed in reaching residents when there is a medical emergency (or a fire or the need for police) "across the tracks," a greater potential for vehicle collisions with trains and for pedestrian accidents, an increase in the amount of airborne pollutants (particulate matter) from diesel engines as well as from coal dust. Additionally, more trains will mean more vehicles idling at train crossings when trains are passing – and adding their exhaust (containing particulate matter and other pollutants) into the air. All of these connected and cumulative impacts must be addressed and analyzed in the EIS.

The economic impacts to all the communities along the rail lines from the GPT facility to the PRB must be considered in the EIS. Federal law requires train engines to blow when approaching a crossing whether that crossing has guard arms that come down or not. There is a process that communities can go through to establish "Quiet Zones" in order to eliminate the sound of train horns. But, the citizens of any Montana community wanting a Quiet Zone generally will have to pay for the infrastructure upgrades required that allow trains to not blow their horns. Many towns and cities in Montana are bisected by rail lines. The cost for infrastructure upgrades, such as overpasses, underpasses, and bypasses, needed to facilitate vehicle traffic in those communities must be addressed and analyzed in the EIS.

The effects of coal export extend far beyond the West Coast export terminals and will result in system-wide impacts throughout the rail transportation system of the region extending back to southeast Montana and northeast Wyoming. Agricultural products, containerized shipments, passenger rail traffic will all be impacted by this proposed project, and those issues must be addressed and analyzed in the EIS.

Because the primary (or sole) reason for the GPT as well as the other proposed West Coast coal export terminals is to ship PRB coal to Asian markets, these terminal projects will lead to a significant increase in coal mining in the PRB. Thus, increased coal mining is a connected and cumulative impact of the GPT and the other proposed West Coast coal export terminals, and these impacts must be addressed and analyzed in the EIS.

The proposed Otter Creek coal mine is just one example of a connected and cumulative impact of the proposed GPT project. If fully developed Otter Creek would become one of the largest new coal strip mines in North America. Otter Creek coal is destined for the export market. Arch Coal (the corporation that wants to open the mine) has made several representations to investors and others that the Asian export markets would be the primary market for the Otter Creek coal. This coal will be shipped, primarily to China, via the proposed new coal export terminals in the Pacific Northwest. Arch Coal as well as other PRB coal corporations have significant interests in these various port terminals as does BNSF.

Not only would the proposed new Otter Creek coal strip mine fundamentally change the character and quality of life in a quiet, rural, productive agricultural region of southeastern Montana; impact wildlife, native grasslands, and cultural resources; destroy aquifers; and lessen air quality, but it would also result in the building of the Tongue River Railroad (TRR). The one and only purpose of building the TRR is to haul Otter Creek coal. This railroad would destroy additional productive agricultural lands, bisect and devalue ranches, and industrialize the region. These and other impacts from increased coal mining will be the direct result of a coal export program that the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion project as well as other West Coast port expansion proposals promote.

Finally, because the sole purpose of the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion project is to facilitate the shipment of coal being transported from the PRB to its final destination in Asia – particularly China – where it will be burned for energy, the Corps must give full consideration to the long-term indirect effects that this federal action will have on global climate. The burning of coal is a connected and cumulative impact of the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur projects. Although all fossil fuels contribute to climate change, coal's contribution is by far the most significant. The export of our nation's coal resources to China and

other Asian nations where it will be burned – often in plants where there are few, if any, air pollution controls in place – will result in significant consequences for Montanans and all Americans. The EIS must examine the connected and cumulative impacts of this proposal on climate change.

I believe that the Corps must give full consideration in their EIS to the long-term direct and indirect effects that the extraction, transport, export shipment, and final combustion of PRB coal present as connected and cumulative impacts of the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion projects. I also believe that the connected and cumulative impacts to Montana from the proposed GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion projects must be included in the EIS.

I oppose the proposed GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion projects, but I traveled to Spokane, Washington, to speak at the public scoping hearing there in early December and I am submitting these written comments because I believe in the NEPA process. Done openly, honestly, and with solid and factual data that is objectively analyzed, I believe the EIS will show the decision makers that the social and environmental costs of the GPT/BNSF Custer Spur expansion projects far outweigh any benefits of the project, except those financial benefits that a few corporations will receive.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this scoping process.

Beth Kaeding

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